

March 2, 2009

Testimony on H.B. Number 6600-An Act Concerning the Establishment of the Sustinet Plan

Tanya Court

The Business Council of Fairfield County

Health care reform should be a central part of our state government's effort to protect its most vulnerable citizens, stimulate its economy, increase workforce productivity and control spending. This reform should be comprehensive in scope, phased in implementation, build on the strengths of the current system while remedying its deficiencies, and be undertaken in coordination with new directions in federal health care policy.

The Sustinet bill creates a new authority to design and implement the new Sustinet Plan. The plan shall be designed to: (1) improve the health of state residents; (2) improve the quality of health care and access to health care; (3) provide health insurance coverage to Connecticut residents who would otherwise be uninsured; (4) improve the quality of health care and access to health care; (5) increase the range of health care insurance coverage options available to residents and employers; and (6) slow the growth of per capita health care spending both in the short-term and in the long-term.

Who could disagree with such goals? The Business Council of Fairfield County's **Connecticut Health Scorecard-2007** calls for Connecticut to commit to the following goal:

"Connecticut will be the healthiest state in the nation, with individuals accepting responsibility for healthy living and high quality health care delivered by the most effective, efficient, safe, timely, patient centered and equitable health care system. All residents will have access to health coverage that is universal, continuous, affordable to individuals and families, affordable and sustainable for the state and its employers, and that enhances health and well being."

We do have some serious reservations about the proposal put forth in Bill 6600:

- **Cost** Notably absent from the proposal is any fiscal analysis of the plan. How much will each component cost? What savings can be achieved by this proposal?
- **New Authority** What will be the impact upon state government? Will any state departments be eliminated? Will current functions now under the purview of state agencies/departments be assumed by the new authority? If so, which ones? There would seem to be some overlap with

the Department of Social Services, Department of Public Health, Department of Insurance, Office of Health Care Access? The Governor's budget eliminates the Office of the Health Care Advocate, while this bill outlines several new responsibilities of this office. How would this be reconciled? The proposed authority would have extensive responsibilities; a staffing plan needs to be developed to fully understand the proposal.

- **Limited liability** Lines 666 through 670 indicate that Sustinet providers who follow care with guidelines provided by the authority can not be sued. Additionally, the authority will develop a no-fault compensation process for individuals who have had bad outcomes. While the idea of a no-fault compensation process has merit, we believe that an individual should retain the right to sue or pursue another process.
- Again we raise concerns about using the current state employee health benefit plan as a base upon which to build this new program.

The Sustinet proposal makes a serious, comprehensive effort to address Connecticut's health care crisis. There is much in the plan that is useful, creative and well worth adopting. However, the questions we raise are fundamental to the viability of the overall plan. Comprehensive solutions need to work in their entirety. Therefore, until the issues we raise are addressed satisfactorily, we cannot support this legislation.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.